

Bonhomme, Penny

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Sent: Thursday, March 15, 2012 2:40 PM
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Subject: Hartford Testimony, 16 Mar 12

Written Testimony for Friday, March 16, 2012
HB 5499
To Be Presented in Person at the Hearing
Ellen Raspitha
914 954 1006

Good Morning,

I am Ellen Raspitha, a 15-year volunteer with Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western CT.

For eleven of those years I served patients and their families as part of a Hospital Visitors Team. Patients, alone or with spouses and families no longer able to care for them, face admission to a nursing home; a decision, I can tell you, that leaves these patients and their loved ones extremely distraught during an already trying and upsetting time.

Why do I know this situation all too well?

In May 2009 my husband, Gus, in his final decline from ALS/Lou Gehrig's disease, experienced shortness of breath. As there is no treatment for ALS, Gus had refused any breathing assistance or a feeding tube. So now was the time to keep him as comfortable as possible. I could not manage Gus's symptoms alone at home with morphine drops, particularly since, at the same time, I was dealing with vertigo.

On Friday, May 8, Gus was admitted to Danbury Hospital on his hospice benefit. By Saturday morning, a mere eighteen hours later, we were discussing where Gus would go when his symptoms stabilized, which they did over that weekend.

Gus knew that by Monday, May 11, he would be going "somewhere else." Where we did not know.

Instead, on Monday, May 11, Gus passed away. With a residential hospice in Danbury, both Gus and I would have had relief and peace for our last three days together.

I also come to you today from Brewster, NY, Putnam County, which borders Fairfield County. Numerous Putnam and Westchester residents already drive the short distance to Danbury for medical care and would benefit tremendously from a local residential hospice under Regional Hospice's excellent standard of care, compassion, and hope.

As both a caregiver and volunteer, or as I say, "from both sides of the bed," please stop these shenanigans by honoring the Hospice movement with the clearly needed change in regulations.